

"Our Strong Rods Broken and Withered."

A DISCOURSE UPON THE RECENT DECEASE

OF

CALHOUN, CLAY, AND WEBSTER,

DELIVERED AT THE

CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

ON THE 14TH DAY OF NOVEMBER, 1852.

BY REV. JOHN C. LORD,

PASTOR OF SAID CHURCH.

BUFFALO :
JEWETT, THOMAS & CO. PRINTERS,

1852.



CORRESPONDENCE.

BUFFALO, NOVEMBER 17th, 1852.

REV. DR. LORD —

Dear Sir: — Having heard, with great interest, your discourse delivered last Sabbath evening, upon the death of Calhoun, Clay, and Webster, and believing that the same would be perused by many with pleasure and profit if printed, we would respectfully request a copy of the discourse for publication.

E. J. BALDWIN,
L. K. PLIMPTON,
M. B. SHERWOOD,
GEORGE PALMER,
GEORGE B. KETCHUM,
JAMES O. PUTNAM,
A. P. YAW,
E. D. LOVERIDGE.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2012 with funding from

The Institute of Museum and Library Services through an Indiana State Library LSTA Grant

DISCOURSE.

“ Her strong rods were broken and withered.”—EZEKIEL xix: 12.

How are the mighty fallen ! For what illustrious victims have the doors of the shadow of death been opened within the passage of a few short months ! The King of Terrors has magnified his office in striking down the loftiest in such rapid succession. From the fresh-covered graves of Calhoun, and Clay, and Webster, there comes a voice, penetrating the hearts of twenty-five millions of people, “ Verily, man, at his best estate, is altogether vanity.” God speaks to us from Heaven, when the angel of his providence is commissioned to summon the spirits of the mighty to the life to come, “ Man being in honor abideth not.” “ I have said, ye are Gods, but ye shall die as men.” When giants lie down to die, death is felt to be the heritage of all ; for then, in the language of the sacred oracles, the grave “ hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure ; and *your* glory, and *your* pomp, and *your* multitude, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it.” But while our common mortality is evidenced and enforced by the decease of the intellectual Titans who have stood a head and shoulders above other men, is there not some demonstration, also, of our common immortality, which is not so manifest in ordinary instances of death ? Does it not seem absurd that

the grave should hold such powers, that such capacities and energies should "lie in cold obstruction;" that such wisdom and knowledge should be smothered beneath the clods of the valley, and all the faculties of such souls perish with their tabernacle of clay? Not until all worlds shall have been explored, all forms of life examined, all space penetrated to the outer verge, where night and nothingness "maintain their ancient solitary sway;" not until it is proven that, ceasing to be manifest *here*, they exist *nowhere*, will we receive the gloomy dogma of modern atheism, "that death is an eternal sleep." The great intellects among men, that shine out like the sun in the firmament, obscuring all lesser lights, are given, among other reasons, as examples of what human nature is capable, to illustrate the revealed truth that man is made only "a little lower than the angels," and is destined, for weal or woe, to an endless existence in a world to come. Who believes that the soul of Newton is lying under the marble of Westminster Abbey; that the mind that measured the universe, and mapped the stars, and discovered the laws that regulate the motions of the innumerable worlds that revolve through space, has perished with the dust and ashes in his sepulchre? Can any man conceive that the vast intellect of Webster was buried in the earth at Marshfield? that his soul is in the grave, around which weeping relatives and friends were recently assembled, expressing *there* a grief which was felt from the northern lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, and from the stormy sea that sings the requiem of the departed statesman by the place of his sepulture, to the distant Pacific, where the California emigrant has carried his fame?

But the particular lesson of the divine providence, when the great and the honorable bow themselves before the touch of the destroyer, is one addressed to the nation whose "strong

rods are broken and withered:" "Put not your trust in man, whose breath is in his nostrils; it is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes." Ezekiel, in the context, represents the former prosperity of the Hebrew State as consisting, mainly, in the strength and greatness of her chief men and counselors: "And she had strong rods for the scepters of them that bare rule, and her stature (for this) was exalted among the thick branches, and she appeared in her height with her multitude of branches;" but afterward, in the day of her calamity, the prophet declares that her "strong rods were broken and withered." What words can be more suitable or expressive, on an occasion like this, in view of the recent decease of the three great statesmen of this continent? Is it not true that *our* "strong rods are broken and withered?" and especially in respect of the recent removal of the lamented Webster, may we not exclaim, in the words of an ancient Hebrew lamentation, "How is the strong staff broken, and the beautiful rod?" Great statesmen, who, with extraordinary powers, possess a pure and lofty patriotism, are the "strong rods" of the nation to whom God has given them. Particularly is this true in a free government, where an enlightened public sentiment is essential to the prosperity and safety of the State. The gifted men who rise above personal and sectional influences—who stand in the breach in the fierce conflicts engendered by party heats, or by a blind and reckless fanaticism, whose curative process for national ills is national destruction; or by the unprincipled ambition of disappointed demagogues, who, if they cannot rule, would ruin the land of their birth—are towers of defense to the republic, against which the waves of faction rage and roar in vain; while, from their lofty summits, a light of hope and guidance shines ever, amid the gloom and darkness which threaten danger to the

people and destruction to the State. Not to the military chieftain, who wears the dazzling honors of successful soldier-ship, can the country look in the hour of real danger. Whatever gratitude may be due the brave men who have borne the banners of the republic in the path of victory, a greater meed of praise belongs to the statesman who has calmed the internal heats which threatened the ruin of the country; who has courageously faced the antagonistic elements which were ready to consume the last asylum and the last hope of freedom; and, by his voice of eloquent entreaty, stilled the tempest and quieted the tumult. No man could fail to esteem the character of the lamented Taylor, who, from the glory of achievements on the battle-field which will bear comparison with any in history, was called to the presidency of the republic, to die in his bed, after escaping a thousand weapons aimed at his life in the deadly conflict, against desperate odds. There was a grand simplicity in his character, like that seen in some of the heroes of antiquity; there was an earnest patriotism—a guileless integrity—which, in his inexperience of political affairs, made the associations of Washington painful, and more trying, perhaps, than the marshaling of four thousand against twenty thousand men at Buena Vista. From the lofty and yet untried position in which his grateful country had placed the veteran soldier, it pleased the Almighty to remove him by sudden death; and the nation responded in the words of David's lament over Jonathan, "The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places; how are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!" and tears were shed by the rude borderer in the wilderness, not alone for the President of the republic, but for the kind and unostentatious soldier, who, years ago, had protected his log-cabin from the assault of the blood-thirsty savage. When such "strong rods are broken and withered," we may echo the

lament of a British bard over the departed heroes and statesmen of his native land :

“ To mute and to material things
 New life revolving summer brings ;
 The genial call dead nature hears,
 And in her glory reappears.
 But oh ! my country's wintry state,
 What second spring shall renovate ?
 What powerful call shall bid arise
 The buried warlike and the wise ?
 The mind that thought for country's weal,
 The hand that grasped the victor's steel ! ”

Or, in the magnificent language of the book of Job, pronounced by Webster to be a far greater poem than the Iliad, we may say, “ There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease; but man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, as the flood decayeth and dryeth up, so man lieth down and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake nor be raised out of their sleep.” Not until, amid the final throes of dissolving nature, the trump of the Archangel and the voice of God shall penetrate the dull cold ear of death; not until the visible heavens be no more and all material elements wither and melt with fervent heat, shall the forms of the mighty, slumbering in the dust, appear again, summoned by the Son of God, at whose voice all that are in their graves shall come forth, and earth, and sea, and death, and hell, deliver up their dead. Great as were the merits—great as were the services of such a man,—who would compare them with the results of the life of Webster, the great expounder of the Constitution, the champion of his nation against the insults of foreign courts, the stern rebuker of treason, standing with his lion port and eagle eye between his country and those who,

ignorantly or wilfully, would have dashed into fragments the priceless gem of our glorious union; rebuking the north, of which he was the chosen statesman, for the hot haste with which they were ready to destroy the life of the republic, to remove a blemish from the body. What military man since the immortal Washington, and he was also a statesman, has conferred such real benefits upon his country as Henry Clay, the great pacificator whose unbounded influence and whose matchless eloquence were ever cast like oil upon the troubled waters of sectional strife? The patriotism of Clay rose above all local or party influences; no man understood better the compromises upon which the union was established and by which it can alone be maintained; no man was more ready to yield his personal preferences for the welfare of the State. His unrivaled powers of oratory swayed all hearts, and had he been a demagogue rather than a patriot, he might have rent the west and south from the confederacy; had his ambition or resentment predominated above his love of country and the union, he might have been the chief of the largest half of the confederacy, which twice refused him the place of president. Who knows from what dangers the stern independence of Calhoun, rising above all party ties, may have delivered the country? Are not such men the gift of God to a nation that he intends to exalt and perpetuate? Is there not here a heroism larger and nobler than that of conquest or victory in the strife of armed hosts? When such pillars of beauty and strength as Calhoun, and Clay, and Webster, are taken away, may we not exclaim, "Our strong rods are broken and withered?" Are we not called upon, as a Christian people, by such providences, to entreat the Most High to raise up, and qualify, and advance men of similar powers and the like spirit to take the place of the illustrious dead? Can there be any

greater proof of God's displeasure, and of the consequent ruin of the republic, than the setting of such luminaries without the rise in the political heavens of stars of similar luster and magnitude? Woe to the land "whose king is a child, and whose princes eat in the morning;" who are governed by the selfish and imbecile; whose leaders are men "wanting principle and wanting bread." We have reason, in the midst of our sorrow, to remember with gratitude and praise to God, that many of the compeers of the illustrious dead,—men of like spirit, who have stood shoulder to shoulder with them in the past conflicts for truth and union, for God and the country—still survive; and that some of them occupy places of influence and power. The Almighty has spared the strong rods whom we lament to-day, until a great crisis had passed, and until they had attained the full number of the years allotted to man; "for the days of our years," says the Psalmist, "are three score years and ten." Let us implore our heavenly Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ, his Son, to remember in mercy the land of the Pilgrims; and as death strikes down the statesman and the patriot, to replace them with "strong rods for the scepters of them that bare rule;" men who shall LOVE their country, fear God, and maintain the principles of religion, order, and law.

Let us remember that the "strong rods" of a nation are the instruments of Him who ruleth in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and that when they are broken and withered, and none are found to succeed them, it is because He has purposed for their sins to destroy them—because he hath written, Ichabod "the glory is departed from thee," on the gates of their prosperity; it is the handwriting on the wall which Belshazzar saw on that night of fear, when there appeared the fingers of a bodiless hand, warning him.

that the "Mede was at his gate," and the Persian preparing occupy his throne.

That these departed statesmen were truly and eminently the "strong rods" of the republic, raised up and qualified by the divine providence for the necessities of the country, will appear from a brief notice of their characteristics and their career.

John C. Calhoun was of that Irish Presbyterian stock which is known to have given two Presidents to the United States, and which has been prolific in the country of great names and great men. The persecutions of the Stuarts, generations since, planted in the north of Ireland a body of Scottish emigrants who sought in this, then sparsely occupied portion of the Emerald Isle, freedom to worship God after the dictates of their consciences. Before the revolution in the American colonies, large numbers of this frugal, energetic and pious people emigrated to this country, and have left everywhere the mark of their noble ancestry. Mr. Calhoun entered early upon public life, and for a period of nearly forty years aided in the counsels of the nation. His sterling integrity, extraordinary independence of character, and eminent ability, were universally acknowledged. It would be impossible to recount the public acts and the public services of such a man: not the least of which was his cleansing the Augean stable of the war department, a truly Herculean task, accomplished by the unremitting labor of seven years at its head. The opinion entertained of him in the early part of his career, in the midst of party strife, and by his political enemies, will be best understood by an extract from the speech in the House of Representatives, of Mr. Grosvenor, of this state, in the session of 1816, who was not only opposed to him politically, but with whom he had a personal difficulty. "No barrier," said Mr. G., "shall exist

which I will not leap over for the purpose of offering to that gentleman (Mr. C.) my thanks for the judicious, independent, and national course which he has pursued in this house for the last two years, and particularly upon the subject before us. Let the honorable gentleman continue with the same manly independence, aloof from party views and local prejudices, to pursue the great interests of his country and fulfill the high destiny for which it is manifest he was born. The buzz of popular applause may not cheer him on his way; but he will inevitably arrive at a high and happy elevation in view of his country and the world:" an eulogy as creditable to him who uttered it as to the great Carolinian, and which has proved prophetic. Mr. Calhoun, as the great statesman and chosen champion of the south, undoubtedly maintained some extreme positions; but that he maintained them honestly none who knew him doubt, and there is in all his public life abundant evidence of his patriotism. Says a writer in the New York Journal of Commerce, "Mr. Calhoun was deeply concerned and agitated by the clouds that overhung the union during the session of 1850, and had often expressed his fears of the result. Though holding life himself by a very frail tenure, he felt deeply for his country, and in his private conversations spoke constantly on the subject. On one occasion, in Feb. 1850, a friend asked him, what will Mr. Webster do? Mr. Calhoun promptly and energetically replied: "He will do all that a statesman and a patriot can do; my hopes rest upon Mr. Webster; he alone can save the Union." On another occasion, after Webster's celebrated speech on the 7th of March following, Mr. Calhoun spoke in the most decided terms in admiration of the speech, and of gratitude to the author for his patriotic and self-sacrificing course in behalf of the Union, adding, "he is too great a man ever to be made President." In the great

conflict, now almost forgotten, in regard to the tariff, when the southern states threatened to secede from the confederacy, the compromise which delivered the country from the imminent peril which threatened its disruption, was the result of propositions presented by Clay and acceded to by Calhoun. When the time of danger came, the men were ready who had been raised up for this very purpose by the divine providence.

In intellectual power, Mr. Calhoun has had but few equals in this country, and but one superior; and this is the verdict of the north rather than the south, who have always maintained that Webster was fully equaled by their favorite statesman. He expressed his thoughts in a bold and vehement manner, and has been compared, in this respect, to Demosthenes, who is thought to have been his model. He possessed an extraordinary faculty of analysis, and could dissect his subject with unrivaled metaphysical acumen. If Webster's intellect may be compared to the telescope, which takes in the range of the heavens, comprehending the vast and penetrating the distant and the difficult; the mind of Calhoun may be likened to the microscope, which, with equal power, discovers the most minute object, and discloses its parts, proportions, and properties. God, in whose visible works there is endless variety, has not departed from this general law in the gifts conferred upon the soul: there is great diversity in mental characteristics, even among those who stand confessed the intellectual leaders of mankind, without which there would be the same monotonous result which must appear in nature if the giants of the forest were all cast in the same mould. In this trio of statesmen, the persuasive and eloquent Clay was utterly unlike his associates in his mental peculiarities. Inferior to Calhoun in acumen, and to Webster in the grasp of his intellect, he was superior to them both as an orator; upon him the

Creator had conferred that most captivating of all gifts, the power of moving the hearts of men, as the waves of the sea are agitated by the wind. As an orator, no American statesman has ever surpassed him ; he had the fire of Patrick Henry with the pathos of Fisher Ames, and may well be thought to have rivaled the great masters of antiquity. To what noble purposes were these high powers devoted ! What exalted patriotism marks the entire career of this great man ! What love of liberty and of his race, for his great heart could embrace in its sympathies more than the country of his birth ! For the down-trodden and oppressed everywhere, that eloquent voice resounded in the halls of our national legislature. He sympathized with every movement for freedom throughout the world. Of the African, whether bond or free, he was the steady friend, and was for many years at the head of that noble institution, favored of God, the American Colonization Society. Whenever there was danger from sectional strife, whenever the integrity of the union was threatened, Henry Clay was first in the breach, with the olive-branch of peace, suggesting mutual concession, proposing terms of reconciliation, allaying the tumult with those eloquent words which touch all hearts, and which can arouse or calm the passions of the multitude. So long as the Ruler of nations gives to the country men of the power and patriotism of Clay, there is no danger but what will be averted, no storm that shall not be allayed, no angry passions which will not yield to the voice of truth and holy eloquence. A "strong rod was broken and withered," when the great statesman of the west gave up the ghost. How gloriously did his sun descend bathed in the radiance of Heaven ! For Henry Clay had a better hope than the world could confer ; a brighter prospect than the chair of the chief magistracy ; an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled ; the glory, honor, and immortality for

which he at last sought, was eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Always a believer in the Christian revelation, he became, in the latter years of his life, a professed follower of the Son of God, and witnessed a good confession in the hour and article of death.

The last thought of earth which clung to the soul of Clay, as the golden vistas of Heaven opened to his vision, and all temporal things appeared in their comparative nothingness in the contrast with those eternal realities, which the dying statesman saw by the eye of faith, was of his country and of his country's future; no doubt his last prayer was for the land of his nativity; for the peace, prosperity and union of the republic to which he had dedicated his life. May we not say of him what was said of the great English statesman, the younger Pitt,

"Oh, think how, to his latest day,
When death, just hovering, claimed his prey,
With Palinure's unaltered mood,
Firm at his dangerous post he stood;
Each call for needful rest repelled,
With dying hand the rudder held,
Till, in his fall, with fateful sway,
The steerage of the realm gave way."

As the immortal Chatham was carried, swathed with flannel and in a dying state, to the House of Lords, to warn his country against the oppression of their colonies in North America, and of its results in the dismemberment of the empire, so the three great statesmen of this continent, whose loss we deplore, were, two of them, in their places in the senate of the republic, and one of them at the head of the department of state, days and weeks after the seal of death was set on their care-worn countenances; like the elder Pitt, giving their last hours and their last thoughts to the country which they had served during the period of an ordinary lifetime. Calhoun and Clay were dying

men, when their last speeches were uttered and their last votes recorded in the senate of the United States; and both were impelled, like Chatham, to make their dying couches in the senate chamber, far from the sweet associations of home and the soothing care and tenderness of kindred, because their country was first in their thoughts, and a desire for her union, prosperity, and safety, their ruling passion—a fire in their bones—which neither the exhaustion of age could damp, or the cold touch of death extinguish.

What shall we say of Webster, whose vast intellect towered above all rivalry; who breasted, like a giant as he was, the anti-union tide which, in his own state and among his own constituents, threatened the destruction of all opponents; whose recent death has been felt, from one end of the republic to the other, like the concussion in the forest when some towering oak comes crashing to the ground amid the inferior trees that flourished under its shadow—or, as when some lofty mountain peak, thrusting itself among the stars, topples and falls heavily to the plain—the thundering avalanche shaking the solid earth—the affrighted streams leaping backward toward their fountains—while, from the summit to the base, the vast mountain is moved, and every rock trembles in its place with the downward rush and ruin of the mightiest.

Intellectually, Webster had no equal in this country, and no superior in any land—perhaps not in any age. If he should be thought to be inferior to Burke or Chatham in eloquence, he was undoubtedly their superior as a jurist, possessing greater reasoning powers than either. It may be doubted whether a greater intellect, a mind better balanced, or an understanding more comprehensive, has ever been bestowed by the Creator upon any statesman of ancient or modern times. Whatever were the errors of Webster's life—and to err is

human, even if the man be the loftiest—his patriotism cannot be questioned: it is as conspicuous as his ability. The facts which prove this are the history of his life: too well known, and some of them too recent, to need to be detailed here. Webster will live forever in the hearts of his countrymen: not because of the grandeur of his intellect, but because his powers were devoted to his country; because he jeopardized his political standing, and endured the reproaches of former friends, in behalf of the Union; because he thrust himself, with Herculean power, between the fiery zealots, the extremists of the North and South, and received the blows himself which were designed to break the golden chain of concord and union. For such a day, and such an extremity of danger, God had raised him up, and qualified him with extraordinary gifts, that he might “turn the battle at the gate,” and, like Sampson among the Philistines, shake down the edifice of treason upon the heads of his own and his country’s enemies.

If we may be allowed again to quote from Walter Scott’s eulogy upon the heroes and statesmen of England, we would suggest the following lines, with a slight variation, as appropriate to the great statesman of the North:

“Hadst thou but lived, though stripped of power,
 A watchman on the lonely tower,
 Thy thrilling tramp had roused the land
 When fraud or danger were at hand;
 By thee, as by the beacon’s light,
 Our pilots had kept course aright;
 As some proud column without mate
 Thy strength had propped the tottering State.—
 Now is the stately column broke,
 The beacon light is quenched in smoke,
 The trumpet’s silver sound is still,
 The warder silent on the hill.”

Or, desiring to improve his death by calling the attention of those who occupy high places to the perishing nature of mere

earthly honors, we might quote the words of an English dramatist :

“ Your laurels wither on your brow,
 Then boast no more your mighty deeds ;
 Upon death's purple altar now,
 See where the victor, victim, bleeds ;
 To the cold tomb
 All heads must come ;
 Only the actions of the just
 Smell sweet and blossom in the dust.”

The religious opinions of men so eminent in station, and so distinguished for the possession of commanding powers of intellect, is a point not only in itself interesting, but one which is naturally suggested by the associations of this sacred place, and the day on which we have assembled. Not that the evidence for Christianity rests upon the authority of great names. It was manifestly a part of the design of its divine author that its heavenly origin should be attested by its triumph over the powers of darkness and the rulers of this world, unaided by the wise, the learned, or the powerful. To this end, “ not many noble, not many mighty were called,” in the first age of Christianity. The feeblest instrumentalities were chosen, that the excellency of the power might be seen to be of God and not of men. The testimony of the Holy Spirit was this : “ Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.” The most acute of skeptics has vainly endeavored to account, on natural principles, for the spread of the gospel during the first three centuries. There never was, and there never will be, a sufficient reason given for the triumph of a religion which acknowledged a crucified founder, and was propagated by twelve poor and persecuted men, save the divinity of its author. No candid and thinking mind will ever be persuaded that a faith which crucifies the flesh and its lusts ;

which abases human pride ; which runs counter to all the passions and all the selfishness of human nature ; could have triumphed over the time-honored superstitions and elegant divinities (as Gibbon calls them) of the ancient mythology, which had struck its roots deep with the growth of centuries, or have subdued the hearts of so many millions, who embraced the gospel at the hazard of every earthly interest, and even of life itself—spreading over the world in a few generations, only as it was advanced supernaturally by the omnipotence of Him “who turneth the hearts of the children of men as the rivers of waters are turned.” Yet, in the nineteenth century, it is an interesting, and may prove a profitable investigation, to ascertain what the most gifted minds have thought of the proof of the Christian religion—to know, in this War of Giants, to which side they incline—to ascertain what is their judgment concerning the controversy between Christianity and infidelity : in which, on both sides, learned, acute, and able men have been engaged for sixteen centuries—from the time of Julian and Porphyry to that of Hume and Voltaire. In this age and country, no public man will be suspected of advocating the truth of Christianity against his convictions. The religious opinions of public men have little to do with the matter of public favor or popularity. Jefferson, one of our most popular, as well as one of our greatest statesmen, was tinctured with the French infidelity of his day, and did not hesitate to avow his opinions. His biographers inform us that he became, in the end, a convert to the views of Dr. Priestly, and adopted the Unitarian creed. I do not know that Mr. Calhoan has left any record of his religious opinions, though his respect for the institutions of religion, and his uniform regard to the duties enjoined by Christian morality, would lead us to believe that his convictions were on the side of

Christianity. Of Mr. Clay we have already spoken : he was, for several years before his death, a communicant in a Christian church, and died in the faith and hope of the gospel. Behold the venerable statesman going from his last work in the senate of his country to his couch of sickness and death ! He has finished his course ! Exhausted with age, the strong man bows himself—the keepers of the house begin to tremble ! Yet, broken with disease and pain, the aged sufferer is full of peace, and hope, and joy ! Not that he can look with complacency upon all the acts of his past life ; but he knows that his Redeemer liveth—that he is justified by the blood of atonement—that henceforth there is laid up for him a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give him in that day. He is far from home and the scenes of his childhood. His country has called him, in his great age, to her rescue : he has fulfilled his mission, but his strength is gone ; in this last effort “the silver cord is loosed, the golden bowl is broken !” He will never look again upon the old familiar faces ; but God is with him. He hears the voice of the Saviour, “Lo, I am with you alway !” He beholds the great High Priest of his profession at the right hand of the Eternal Majesty ; and, as the death-damps gather on his brow—as the earthly house of his tabernacle is dissolved—he knows that he has “a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens.”

And as the remains of the illustrious dead are passing to the distant Ashland, to mingle with kindred dust, the sacred relics can hardly find way through the numbers that crowd around his coffin in every city and town through which it is borne to its resting-place, with the tears and lamentations of a nation, like “the mourning of Hadad-rimmon in the valley of Megiddon.”

But what were the conclusions of that great intellect, more capable than that of any living man of comprehending, comparing and weighing the proofs and arguments for and against Christianity? What was the judgment of the most profound understanding of the age? What were the opinions of the great jurist who had spent a long life in weighing testimony, and determining truth from evidence? I know it may be replied, that his life was, in some particulars, opposed to his avowed convictions; but who does not know that the clearest apprehensions of the understanding are often overborne by the strength of the passions, even in the case of the most intellectual. Webster's opinions will survive his errors. We may say with the Latins, "*de mortuis, nil nisi bonum*;" or, with a far higher authority, "let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone." We shall not refer here to Mr. Webster's profession of religion in an orthodox church in early life, or to the feelings and impulses of his youth, in which, like many others, he may have been mistaken; but to the deliberate convictions of his maturer years — to the repeated and recorded judgment of his ripened understanding, in favor of the truth and inspiration of the Christian revelation. Whoever has read his celebrated speech in the case of the heirs of Girard, must have seen how fully Webster apprehended the proofs and felt the claims of the gospel. I shall now read a few extracts from reliable authority, of the religious views and opinions entertained by Mr. Webster. Says an eminent clergyman:

I have, from this desk, witnessed his emotions, as he has listened to discourses. I remember one incident which clearly and beautifully illustrates his religious faith. It was in the interval between the death of his daughter, Mrs. Julia Appleton, and his son, Major Edward Webster. I called on him to extend my sympathy for him in his deep affliction. As we met, there was a clasping of hands; neither spoke for a few moments, when he was

the first to speak. He said: "I feel at this hour, that all that constitutes the glory of man is the religion of Jesus; there is nothing but this worthy to live for. I should wish this to be placed on her tombstone at Marshfield: 'She was a believer in Jesus.'" That sentence, uttered in that deep tone of voice, his whole frame quivering with emotion, made an impression on my mind that I can never forget.

Says a writer in the *New York Commercial Advertiser* :

Mr. Webster, we believe, was not, at the time of his death, a member of any religious denomination. In the early part of his life, he was in connection with the Presbyterian church. We know that he had high regard for the public profession of religion in others, and rejoiced when such showed their fidelity to their professions by a corresponding life.

Some years ago, we had the pleasure of spending several days in company with Mr. Webster, at the residence of a mutual friend, Harvey Ely, Esq., at Rochester. During that intercourse, we had more than one opportunity of conversing on religious subjects — sometimes on doctrinal points, but more generally on the importance of the Holy Scriptures, as containing the plan of man's salvation, through the atonement of Christ. So far as our knowledge of the subject extends, Mr. Webster was as orthodox as any we ever conversed with.

On one occasion, when seated in the drawing-room with Mr. and Mrs. Ely, Mr. Webster laid his hand on a copy of the Scriptures, saying, with great emphasis, "This is the book!" This led to conversation on the importance of the Scriptures, and the too frequent neglect of the study of the Bible by gentlemen of the legal profession, their pursuits in life leading them to the almost exclusive study of works having reference to their profession. Mr. Webster said, "I have read through the entire Bible many times. I now make a practice to go through it once a year. It is the book of all others for lawyers as well as for divines; and I pity the man that cannot find in it a rich supply of thought, and of rules for his conduct; it fits man for life — it prepares him for death."

The conversation then turned upon sudden deaths; and Mr. Webster adverted to the then recent death of his brother, who expired suddenly at Concord, N. H. "My brother," he continued, "knew the importance of Bible truths. The Bible led him to prayer, and prayer was his communion with God. On the day on which he died, he was engaged in an importan

cause in the court then in session. But this cause, important as it was, did not keep him from his duty to his God; he found time for prayer, for on the desk which he had just left, was found a paper written by him on that day, which, for fervent piety, a devotedness to his Heavenly Master, and for expressions of humility, I think was never excelled."

Mr. Webster then mentioned the satisfaction he had derived from the preaching of certain clergymen, observing "that men were so constituted that we could not all expect the same spiritual benefit under the ministry of the same clergymen." He regretted that there was not more harmony of feeling among professors generally, who believed in the great truths of our common Christianity. Difference of opinion, he admitted, was proper; but yet, with that difference, the main objects should be, love to God — love to our fellow-creatures. In all Mr. Webster's conversations, he maintained true catholicity of feeling.

This brief sketch of Mr. Webster's religious views we give from memory; we know that it is correct in substance, for his remarks made an impression upon our mind that can not be effaced.

The following statement is made in the *Congregational Journal*:

A few evenings since, sitting by his own fireside, after a day of severe labor in the Supreme Court, Mr. Webster introduced the last Sabbath's sermon, and discoursed in animated and glowing eloquence for an hour, on the great truths of the gospel. I can not but regard the opinions of such a man in some sense as public property. This is my apology for attempting to recall some of those remarks which were uttered in the privacy of the domestic circle. Said Mr. Webster:—"Last Sabbath I listened to an able and learned discourse upon the evidences of Christianity. The arguments were drawn from prophecy, history, with internal evidence. They were stated with logical accuracy and force; but, as it seemed to me, the clergyman failed to draw from them the right conclusion. He came so near the truth that I was astonished that he missed it. In summing up his arguments, he said, 'The only alternative presented by these evidences is this:— Either Christianity is true, or it is a delusion produced by an excited imagination.' Such is not the alternative," said the critic; "but it is this:—The gospel is either true history, or it is a consummate fraud; it is either a reality or an imposition. Christ was what he professed to be, or he was an impostor.

There is no other alternative. His spotless life in his earnest enforcement of the truth — his suffering in its defense — forbids us to suppose that he was suffering an illusion of a heated brain. Every act of his pure and holy life shows that he was the author of truth, the advocate of truth, the earnest defender of truth, and the uncompromising sufferer for truth. Now, considering the purity of his doctrines, the simplicity of his life, and the sublimity of his death, is it possible that he would have died for an illusion? In all his preaching, the Saviour made no popular appeals. His discourses were all directed to the individual. Christ and his apostles sought to impress upon every man the conviction that he must stand or fall alone — he must live for himself and die for himself, and give up his account to the omniscient God, as though he were the only dependent creature in the universe. The gospel leaves the individual sinner alone with himself and his God. To his own master he stands or falls. He has nothing to hope from the aid and sympathy of associates. The deluded advocates of new doctrines do not so preach. Christ and his apostles, had they been deceivers, would not have so preached. If clergymen in our days would return to the simplicity of the gospel, and preach more to individuals and less to the crowd, there would not be so much complaint of the decline of true religion. Many of the ministers of the present day take their text from St. Paul, and preach from the newspapers. When they do so, I prefer to enjoy my own thoughts rather than to listen. I want my pastor to come to me in the spirit of the gospel, saying, ‘You are mortal! your probation is brief; your work must be done speedily. You are immortal, too; you are hastening to the bar of God; the Judge standeth before the door.’ When I am thus admonished, I have no disposition to muse or to sleep. These topics,” said Mr. Webster, “have often occupied my thoughts, and if I had time I would write on them myself.”

The above remarks are but a meager and imperfect abstract, from memory, of one of the most eloquent sermons to which I ever listened.

Much more might be gathered of the opinions of the great statesman on religious subjects, did time permit. Nor need I refer to the closing scene, when the sun of Webster set “in full-orbed majesty.” Every one will draw his own conclusions from the words then uttered. One thing is manifest: Webster’s intellectual conviction of the truth of the gospel was

clear, decided and profound ; and it may serve to rebuke the shallow infidelity of some, and the indifference of others, that the most profound intellect of the age was penetrated with the truth of Christianity: that Daniel Webster was a diligent attendant upon the means of grace, a constant reader of the sacred Scriptures.

Of this noble trio of American statesmen it may be said, that none of the arts of the demagogue were ever used by them for the attainment of place and power. Calhoun was kept constantly in public life by the sagacity of the South ; he had never the need to canvass his district or his state. Whenever Henry Clay would consent to represent Kentucky in the senate, her legislature sent him there with almost entire unanimity. Daniel Webster was urged to take office, and Massachusetts never faltered in his support. When the perquisites of office are the sole motives that lead men to seek places in our national counsels, the people may be sure of the unfitness of such candidates ; for under our economical system, no one possessing a high order of talent but must make a pecuniary sacrifice in accepting any position, if we except the first, and that is hardly an exception.

But "our strong rods are broken and withered !" Divided in regard to many questions in life — united in their last acts for the preservation of the Union — they passed, as it were, together to the unseen world — they sleep their last sleep, to wake no more till the archangel, standing on sea and land, shall swear by Him that liveth forever and ever, that time shall be no longer.

Of them their countrymen may say, in the language of the poet before quoted,

" With more than mortal power endowed,
 How high they soared above the crowd ;
 Theirs was no common party race,
 Jostling, by dark intrigue, for place ;
 Like fabled gods, their mighty war
 Shook realms and nations in its jar.
 Genius, and taste, and talent gone,
 Forever tomb'd beneath the stone,
 Where, taming thoughts of human pride,
 The mighty dead sleep side by side.
 Seek not for these a separate dome,
 Whom fate made partners in the tomb !
 But search the land of living men,
 Where wilt thou find their like again ? "

While we mourn the loss of the " strong rods " of the nation, broken and withered by the touch of the King of Terrors, we ought not to forget that the gift of such men to a people is a token of the divine favor, deserving our gratitude and exciting us to emotions of praise. Their example and influence survive ; their actions belong to history ; their words will be read by the remotest generations ; their lofty eloquence and devoted patriotism will be perpetual models, exciting a generous ambition in future statesmen to attain their honorable and wide-spread fame. " I still live ! " said Webster, as his great soul was about to escape from its broken tabernacle. Memorable words, which might properly be engraved on the marble which a grateful people shall erect over his remains. Webster, Clay and Calhoun still live in the hearts of their countrymen ; they still live in thoughts " that breathe and words that burn ; " they still live in their example and influence ; for, " though dead, they yet speak." As the descending sun leaves behind him a track of light, so the lingering rays of these departed luminaries of our political heavens shall shine upon coming generations.

They still live in another sense : for they have only exchanged worlds ; or rather, have gone from one world to

behold all worlds, as denizens of the universe. The impassable solitude of space which separates the inhabitants of our planet from all others, exists no more for them; they behold, with unvailed vision, the secrets of the life to come. Eternity, with all its mysteries—with its rewards and penalties—is opened before those mighty intellects, for whom time, with all its interests, was but too circumscribed; they live, with the innumerable company that, for weal or woe, have gone before them—who have entered upon a life which knows no end, and no change but the ever-increasing intensity of the joys or sorrows of the separate state of departed spirits.

As the illustrious dead are gone to give an account of the deeds done in the body—to answer for the responsibilities of the wide sphere of action and the large stewardship committed to them, so every one of us shall soon pass to the same dread tribunal, to receive a judgment according to our works; for he who had one talent, is represented by our Lord as called to an account with him that had ten, and condemned because he had hidden his Lord's money! Happy and blessed are they who have taken sanctuary in *Him* who is as “the shadow of a great rock in a weary land;” “who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification;” “who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him;” who gave one hour of triumph to the powers of darkness, that he might win for us eternal redemption from Death and Hell; exclaiming, as he ascended in triumph, bearing gifts for men, “O death, I will be thy plagues! O grave, I will be thy destruction!”

Concerning “our strong rods broken and withered,” we may conclude with the ancient lamentation of Moses, the man of God, recorded in the ninetyeth Psalm: “Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep; in

the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and withereth. For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. Return, O Lord, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. O satisfy us early with thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands, establish thou it."



71. 2009. 084 09428

